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ABSTRACT

This document presents one in a series of twenty-three case studies derived from in-depth interviews using a sampling of former participants in the Mountain-Plains program, a residential, family-based education program developed to improve the economic potential and lifestyle of selected student families in a six-state area. Each case study contains the following information about a specific student family: biographical data; participation in the educational and community programs; home, income, placement, and employment data; stated problems and/or satisfactions; summaries of the participants' personal and social development; individual ratings of the program; scripts of personal interviews; interviewer comments; and individual test scores and self-assessments. This document presents specific findings on James and Anita Randle, who entered the program with five children and a history of sporadic employment. The follow-up study reports that the Randles completed the program but rate the program as neither a positive or a negative influence on their lives. (Names in these studies have been changed.) Two other documents are included in the series: a report which examines work and income variables for the group (ED 110 610) and a report which summarizes group findings on personal and social development (CE 014 681). (BM)

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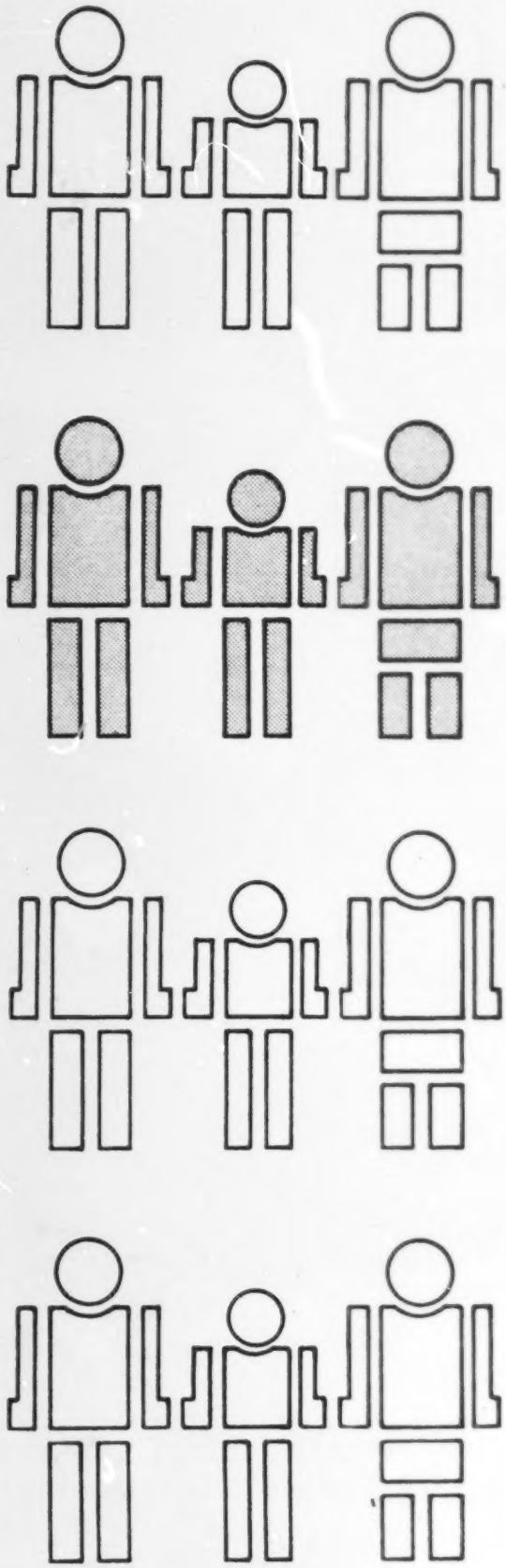

CASE STUDY REPORT #24

JAMES & ANITA RANDLE

CE 014 680

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
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MOUNTAIN PLAINS EDUCATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INC.

CASE STUDY REPORT

JAMES AND ANITA RANDLE

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August, 1975

A Product of Research Services Division
David A. Coyle, Director

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PREFACE

Reports in this series are derived from in depth interviews using a stratified random sample of former Mountain-Plains students. Interviews were conducted from November, 1974 through January, 1975 by Mountain-Plains professional research staff. Case Study Report 1 examines Work and Income variables for the group. Case Study Reports 2 through 24 include specific findings on each family included in the sampling. Case Study Report 25 summarizes group findings on personal and social development. A summary of the research design for the Case Study Reports is documented in: Coyle, David A.; Conrad, Rowan W.; and Myers, Douglas D. In Depth Case Study of Exited Families: A Summary of the Research Design for Phase 1 Preliminary Effects Study. Glasgow, Montana: Mountain-Plains Press, 1974. Specific documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in either Case Study Report 1 or Case Study Report 25. All names in these studies have been changed.

Michael C. Fenenbock
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CASE STUDY REPORT

JAMES AND ANITA RANDLE

BACKGROUND

James and Anita Randle, their four sons and one daughter--aged 13, 12, 8, 6, and 1 year old--entered Mountain-Plains in October, 1973. All seven Randles were living in a suburban, four room farm house--with crooked doors and windows and slanted floors--in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Indeed, James recalls, "the old house got really cold in winter time." Although James had been unemployed for sometime, the Randles were buying the old farm house, paying $90 monthly installments on the mortagage, and running up an additional $30 monthly in utility bills. Although eligible, the Randles were not taking advantage of food stamps because, James states loudly whenever asked, "I do not believe in it!" Indeed, according to him, "People are entirely too free these days with the taxpayers' money."

James had accumulated a ninth grade education as well as nine weeks "special training" in utility repair. His past employment had been as a helper in a bakery and as a night watchman in a fish hatchery. Anita too was unemployed, and had no past record of any employment although she had completed high school.

At the time of their departure from Mountain-Plains in April, 1974, the Randles made no request for placement assistance saying, "Don't need it. We're moving

to Minnesota." Having lost contact with the family, Mountain-Plains subsequently learned--quite by accident--that the Randles were once again living in Grand Forks. Contacted by the North Dakota State Office, James, the State Office reports, expressed extreme dissatisfaction with Mountain-Plains, refused to talk to anyone connected with the program, and briskly slammed down the telephone. When contacted a second time, with reference to participation in the follow-up interviews, James repeated his performance. Contacted directly by the interviewer--albeit somewhat reluctantly--James agreed to participate, saying, "I'm not mad at counselors or teachers just at the State Office and the administration people." (During the Randle's stay in the program the interviewer had been working as a counselor and was, on that ground at least, creditable to James.)

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

While at Mountain-Plains both James and Anita reportedly had difficulty with time competence, that is, they had a problem focusing on tasks at hand and appeared to be constantly reliving the "glories" of the past while at the same time planning new "glories" for the future. Both seemed to possess stiff and inflexible value systems, tended to be shocked and occasionally disgusted when faced with the values of others, and James was reported to have a low trust level. "He really didn't trust anyone and tended to be very reserved with staff and fellow students," an instructor remembered. When the topic of James' low trust level was pursued in group counseling sessions however, he appeared to develop a bit more flexibility towards other holding different

values. This observation of gains in Counseling for James is confirmed by pre/post testing which indicated that he had made significant improvement in the area of rigidity in application of values as well as on trust. While Anita's test scores showed no gain in these areas, she and James both recorded gains in time competency--paying attention to current tasks. Apparently, the Randles currently spend more time focusing on the present, as opposed to their former preoccupation with the past and the future--observed to be the case in their post program verbalizations as well.

HOME AND INCOME

Currently, James, Anita, and the children are living in the same run-down, four room farm house they were purchasing at the time of program entry. No longer buying the house, the Randles are now renting, having been forced to sell the mortagage for "financial reasons."

Following their exit from Mountain-Plains, James reports he was employed "for about a month" as a construction company laborer at $2.50 an hour. Leaving the construction company, James took a part-time job driving a garbage truck at $100 weekly--the job required some 30 hours of James' time weekly. By September he was driving a second garbage route as well as having accepted a position with the local Board of Education as a custodian for the high school. Earning $100 a week on the new garbage route and $622 a month as a custodian, James was shortly forced to "give up" the garbage route as "the winter weather," he said, "and the lousy equipment," made it impossible for him to

complete the route and still be on time for his "regular job" (the custodian position). Presently, James continues to work as a custodian at the high school. Anita however, when asked if she had been working, replied abruptly, "With five kids? Are you kidding me!"

The family still holds plans to move to Minnesota, however, since leaving Mountain-Plains they have used up some $3,000 in savings just in meeting normal living expensives. They have not however, incurred new debts and those that were outstanding at the time of program entry are now "paid off."

EMPLOYMENT

James is enrolled in the Board of Education's Janitor trainee program. He reports that he does not particularly like custodian work, which is reflected in his JDI rating where he rates the work itself at the 8th percentile. Subjectively, James rated his co-workers as "very good," and the supervisor relationship, over all environment, and company policies to be "very good," as well. These ratings are consistant with the JDI percentile as pay was rated at the 35 percentile, promotions at the 60th, supervision at the 95th, and co-workers at the 55th percentile. He scores slightly above the norm on work which is consistent with his self report. (See figure 3).

His supervisor reported the quality of James' work and his attendance as "average." His general attitude is "good" and he gets along with his fellow workers "average." James, the supervisor said, gets along with his supervisors "a little better than average." Overall, the supervisor reported, "James

is not setting the world on fire, but then again he isn't burning it down either." "He's a little slow to catch on sometimes," the supervisor said, but once he does, he does good work--he does a good job, he does what is expected, he pays attention and he tries. Sometimes he does extra things that need doing, especially when he isn't told to do them. I can't predict his future development, he could require some help but then I think he'll go on okay."

The supervisor explained that James' employment was coordinated with the Janitor trainee program and that the high school where James worked was a training center for all the other schools in the city. He fully expected James to be transferred, and to have independent responsibility for one of the grade schools or the jr. high the following year.

The supervisor's comparative ratings on the MSS were not strong. Perhaps because he was rating James, a trainee, against others who were "full time, full fledged" janitors. He rated James' overall at the 18th percentile; specific work performance at the 20th; conformance at the 36th; dependability at the 25th; personal adjustment at the 30th. (See figure 1.) However, in terms of rating James' overall value as an employee he selected the second quartile (this quartile is much more consistant with his discussion rating than is the MSS scale rating.)

Commenting on his employment, James said, "It don't take a brain to push a broom," and, "I don't really like working at night." "It's a way to make a living," he says, "I really don't like janitor work." The only things he likes

about the job, he says, are the people he works with, and he has a "good boss." James takes little satisfaction from anything else on the job he reports, "it really gives me no sense of accomplishment because it's a job that anybody can do." He does not enjoy cleaning in general, and would rather be "outdoors." Then again he says, "I don't have any real complaint. There 's no times that I feel particularly good or bad--it's just a job." There has been no real "hassle" on his current job, James says, except during the period he was driving the garbage route ("making two jobs"), and he resolved that by quitting the route--although, he says, "I really miss the extra income."

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

James and Anita score above the norm on both powerlessness and anomie, indicating that they do not feel they have a great deal of ability to influence their lines and that they have poor social field integration. This fits with James' frequent negative verbalization about society, politics and politicians.

James does not rate himself as changed on any personal trait as a result of Mountain-Plains program participation. This is in conflict with both Counseling reports and pre/post psychological testing which indicated that James made significant gains on several variables. Similarly, during the course of the interview, James was observed to be less rigid than previously. Anita, on the other hand feels she has made gains on appearance, punctuality, self confidence, self knowledge, and, she says, she is "better at" taking responsibility for tasks. Additionally, Anita believes herself to be more courteous

toward others now, and that she is more ambitious for herself and her family. (Analysizing pre/post psychological testing, Anita appears to have made fewer gains than James at program exit.)

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The Randles report no involvement in community activities other than church membership--which they do not regularly attend. Leisure activities, they report, are limited to James' "tinkering" (James has a whole garage full of various pieces of small engines and such), visiting relatives, and going for drives--all family group activities.

James views his responsibility toward the community as limited to taking care of his family and young. He voted in the last election, and says he will vote in the next one as well.

PROBLEMS AND STATISFACTIONS

Currently Anita's self concept is very uneven--ranging from 1½ deviation below the norm on identity to ½ standard deviation above norm on moral ethical self concept. (See figure 4.) Although uneven, her overall self concept development would appear to be adequate in terms of avoiding major problems. James' self concept, on the other hand, is very even and rated right at the norm. On none of the variables does he score as much as a ½ standard deviation low and only on family self concept is he as much as ½ standard deviation above the norm. Thus James' self concept appears to be adequate to insure performance in most employment situations.

He is currently dissatisfied with his life, James reports, whereas Anita says she is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with life. Both report that the thing that gives the most satisfaction in life are their children. Other than that, "things are only somewhat satisfying" to the Randles, including the fact that "we don't owe any money, and aren't going backwards anymore like we were for a while since Mountain-Plains, so it's okay now."

They have had both "good" and "bad breaks" in life although, they have had no good breaks recently, "not since we decided to go to Mountain-Plains." Their major bad break was related as, "We couldn't sell the house at first and so we couldn't go to Minnesota like we planned." (The house was broken into and looted while the family was attending Mountain-Plains and, as a consequence, was not initially in a salable condition.)

Currently the Randles are dissatisfied living in town, want to live "in a more rural kind of place," or preferably "even on a farm." Anita said what she wants most is a bigger house, "I don't really care where it is." James would like to "be in" small engines rather than "puttering around as a janitor." "I don't like the low wages paid in North Dakota," he says. "I was making this much five years ago in Minnesota," and he fully intends to return to Minnesota at the first opportunity. "The thing," James says, "that gets me down the most is living in town." Anita said the thing that gets her down the most is "having a bunch of active kids all cramped in a small house in town."

Both Randles feel they can affect the future by saving money "so we can move back to Minnesota," and James says, by "getting some more training."

RATING THE MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM

The Randles rated Mountain-Plains as a neutral influence on their lives--neither positive nor negative. (See table 2). This rating was a surprise since James constantly complained about Mountain-Plains. Unique among families in the follow-up study, the Randles both said that knowing what they know now about Mountain-Plains they would not have chosen to attend. However, James said, knowing the changes that have taken place since they left "I'd go back to Mountain-Plains the way it is today."

The Randles rated all aspects of Mountain-Plains with which they were in contact as of "much" or "some use" to them with exception of English and job training which James said was of "little use," and Guidance, Counseling, Consumer Education, Community Development and Home Management which he rated as of "no use." More charitable in her rating, Anita rated only one aspect of Mountain-Plains as of "little" or "no use"--Consumer Education. When asked to rate both the "most" and "least useful" aspects of the program James listed Math as "most useful" and Community Development "least useful." Math, James said, is the "most useful" because "you use it everyday and they had the best teachers in the whole school." Anita recalled learning "a lot of things" she had not known in health such as first-aid "and medicine safety." Consumer Education was "not useful," James said, "the teacher doesn't know

as much as he pretends--he gives some really bad advice." Community Development, James said, is "a farce because there is no community and there is no authority and you can't do anything." Anita rated Consumer Education low because she did not like the teacher who was, according to Anita, "a phoney." Both were particularly angry about Consumer Education because, they said, they had a great deal of experience with things like buying homes and insurance policies, and not only was the teacher "a phoney" but, the Randles recollected, he "actually gave out some bad advice to people." They thought this especially serious since "most people at Mountain-Plains didn't have experience themselves (upon which to judge the advice that they were getting) and most of them fell for his lines, since he was a good con man."

When asked if the job skills acquired had been adequate, James said "Hell no! I was in one building and the instructor was in another building. I couldn't get any questions answered and I didn't learn enough. In small engines you have to start on commission and my family would've starved to death for the first six months. The instructor was good, if only I could have been able to see him."

Asked for suggestions in the training area, James responded; "Let people know there is a lot of job opportunities in small engines. Everybody kept talking like there aren't." Additionally, he said, "Make sure that the instructor is there for the students and not off somewhere else in another

buidling or working on curriculum or something." Small engine tools, James said, were needed in the area, and "the parts situation was impossible. People would take parts out of boxes from other engines because they needed the parts. There was way to much time delay between tear down and reassembly, and by the time you get around to reassembly somebody had stolen your parts because it was the only way they could get 'em." Too much time was wasted in clean-up, James said, "The administration was more interested in having the place look pretty than making it work! Somebody would be coming down for a tour or an inspection and then you'd have to take all the work and hide it in the closet to make the area look pretty and then when they left they would have to go and pull it all out and sort it out again."

The math skills, James reports, are adequate for his job as is his English. Anita reported that the math and English skills she acquired were adequate for "anything I need to do around the house." He would not change occupational choices, James said, "I like small engines." Anita reports she would "probably do something now if I had the chance but the baby sitting wasn't paid for like they told us before we went." Neither James nor Anita felt they had been helped in either Career Guidance or Counseling; although earlier, James said one of the "good things" he discovered at Mountain-Plains was his interest in small engines. Both Career Guidance and Counseling, James recalled, "was a big waste of time!" He suggested Career Guidance employ better

informed personnel and that, "the people should work more with the state coordinators. They get a bunch of college kids that don't know nothing about working. There's too much book crap that's not like the real world." Clearly, James liked neither the guidance counselors nor the guidance curriculum. He did say that he liked his counselor, "She was nice but I didn't need it. Maybe it's fine for people who do. I guess I never knew what the point was for me. I didn't have no problem so it was useless." (It is the interviewer's observation that if anyone ever had a stubbornness rigidity problem, it is James Randle!)[1]

The Randles reported they were "very healthy" before Mountain-Plains and have been healthy ever since, nevertheless, "the kids were sick all the time while we were at Mountain-Plains." The Randles feel confident dealing with health problems but have always been so. However, Anita recalled, she gained added confidence and knowledge in health class.

The Randles are able to make ends meet financially, but it is "harder now" than before Mountain-Plains. Indeed, "before we were saving but since Mountain-Plains we've had to wipe it all out." In general, the family agrees on "how to spend money" but have always been able to do so.

The children behave, the Randles declared, they have little trouble with them, understand them, feel close to them, and this has always been the case. The interviewer has never seen five children behave so well and still be so obviously

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[1] It was also noted on pre/post testing that whether he liked it or not, James made gains on Counseling objectives.

unrepressed. (This might be an argument for consistency in dealing with children since James' rigidity would prevent him from ever being inconsistant. It is seriously doubted that anyone ever had any trouble knowing exactly where James stood on anything.)

James and Anita were asked if they had any general comments about Mountain-Plains, to which James responded, "I certainly do!" "That place," he said, "had too damn much red tape! By the time anything is ever done about a problem--say like your training area--you're already done and gone. Everything they do up there is just for statistics and for getting the money. Nothing is done really for the people that are just trying to go to school."

Asked if he remembered anything good at Mountain-Plains, James thought a bit, then said, "the way it was set up, let me tell you it didn't do anybody a hell of a lot of good--not while I was there. The math and English was okay but you can get that anyplace and a whole lot cheaper too. I can get night classes right here in Grand Forks, free-for-nothing. I'll tell you, people at Mountain-Plains are too free with the taxpayers' money!" After considerable discussion, the best James could say about Mountain-Plains was, "The teachers and counselors were nice. . . . I guess."

Asked to be specific about what he did not like at Mountain-Plains, James remembered "there wasn't enough training and too much on all that core curriculum stuff. Then too, my State Coordinator didn't tell me I couldn't get what I wanted when I was on the way in." Cycling back, he commented, "there was too little regard for the tax payers money, too many top level people with big offices and big salaries,

not really anything for the program, not really doing the whole thing a lot of good and not nearly enough people in other places like teachers in the areas." "There was too much paperwork," James concluded, "and too little time actually working with equipment."

FEMALE INTERVIEW

Anita is happy with herself physically, with her looks, and with her health, and she is fully confident, she says, in doing all her home care tasks. When questioned about time pressure, Anita replied, "Not really. I can get things done and have some time myself."

Sometimes James helps around the house, she reports, "and the kids help sometimes too." "I don't do much outside the home," Anita said, "with five kids I got enough to do at home!" Uncertain whether she was satisfied with her role in life or not, Anita said, "I guess so." (This ambivalent response fits with her Tennessee Self Concept scale score in which she rated quite low on identity.) Anita did not take occupational preparation while at Mountain-Plains, but, "I would've done it different if I'd had a baby sitter. Mountain-Plains didn't pay for the baby-sitter like they had promised."

She rarely does things just for herself, does everything "pretty much" for her husband and children, but, "If I did something for myself I sure wouldn't feel guilty about it!"

She often reaches out and takes initiative, "but then, I always have." (Surprising to the interviewer as Anita strikes him as the type who has never taken initiative

beyond saying yes to James.) Happy and confident as a woman, Anita likes herself and if she were someone else would choose herself as a friend because, "I'm easy to get along with, and I'm honest and dependable." James talks over his work with her, Anita says, she is aware of what his job entails, and he reviews job problems with her. The family generally makes decisions together, Anita says, but she decides on food and meals, and James decides on "things about the car, and all that." Child raising problems are mutually discussed and, according to her, both take a hand in discipling the children. Both, however, agree that James is "better at this." (As mentioned, Anita is as ambivalent as James is rigid.) James has "not changed at all since he went to Mountain-Plains," she said, "He's the same old James." She has not changed either, Anita reports, but presented with a trait list she outlines a series of improvements. Problems now "aren't much different" than those they had before they went to Mountain-Plains. "We have less in the bank so we don't have a cushion anymore--then again the problems weren't really serious then--but they aren't too serious now either."

INTERVIEWER COMMENTS

Although James may appear to be a rigid, obnoxious type, he is quite to the contrary, a rigid delightful type. Both James and Anita are short and thin--about 5' tall and 100 pounds each--and as a consequence James' tirades take on a "mouse that roared" quality. He bluffs a lot, is not nearly as terrible as he likes to pretend, and seemingly anyone sufficiently perceptive to see through him and call his bluff is accepted as a friend--those who either submit

or are trapped into banal argument are disregarded.

James and Anita's relationship with their children appears to be ideal. For example, the interviewer and the Randle family went out to dinner on a Sunday noon; Five children sat in a row, explored the menu, ordered their choice, ate with enjoyment, talked and laughed with each other and the adults, and all without disturbing other tables.

James' anger at Mountain-Plains seems to center on two areas. First, James, feels he did not acquire the level training necessary to earn his way as a small engine mechanic--although he validated the area at Mountain-Plains. More training, more "hands on" experience, is James' suggestion. Secondly, James blames Mountain-Plains adminstration rather than the instructors for the "conditions at Mountain-Plains" and even though he disliked Counseling, he did like his counselor and was generally favorable toward the Mountain-Plains staff. Hostile toward the State Office, he felt that while they did not overly mislead him (except on the availability of child care) he was knowingly allowed to make assumptions about the program which were not valid.

The ultimate success of the Randle family is not in question. James has a high self concept and by all reports is a very reliable worker, and the family relationships are excellent. While James would benefit from a less rigid personality his rigidity lends him a certain charm and uniqueness that the interviewer feels the world would be poorer without.[2] He reportedly made gains in this

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[2]Keeping in mind researchers have a professional attachment for unique variance.

area through Counseling and apparently the amount of rigidity James has in reserve serves a value as a part of his over-all "character." Thus, the small gains made appear to be quite sufficient.

Mountain-Plains seemingly failed James, in that the program did not provide him with sufficient skills in order that he function in employment of his choice. Dissatisfied with his current employment, James plans to move and has explored other possibilities for gaining additional training on small engines. Nevertheless, James feels trapped by the fact of his large family responsibilty and "just can't take the time off anyway to get the training." In fact, he said, "Mountain-Plains was my last chance in life (James is now 40) to get me a skill for a profession." He believes Mountain-Plains failed him, and he is very bitter about it.

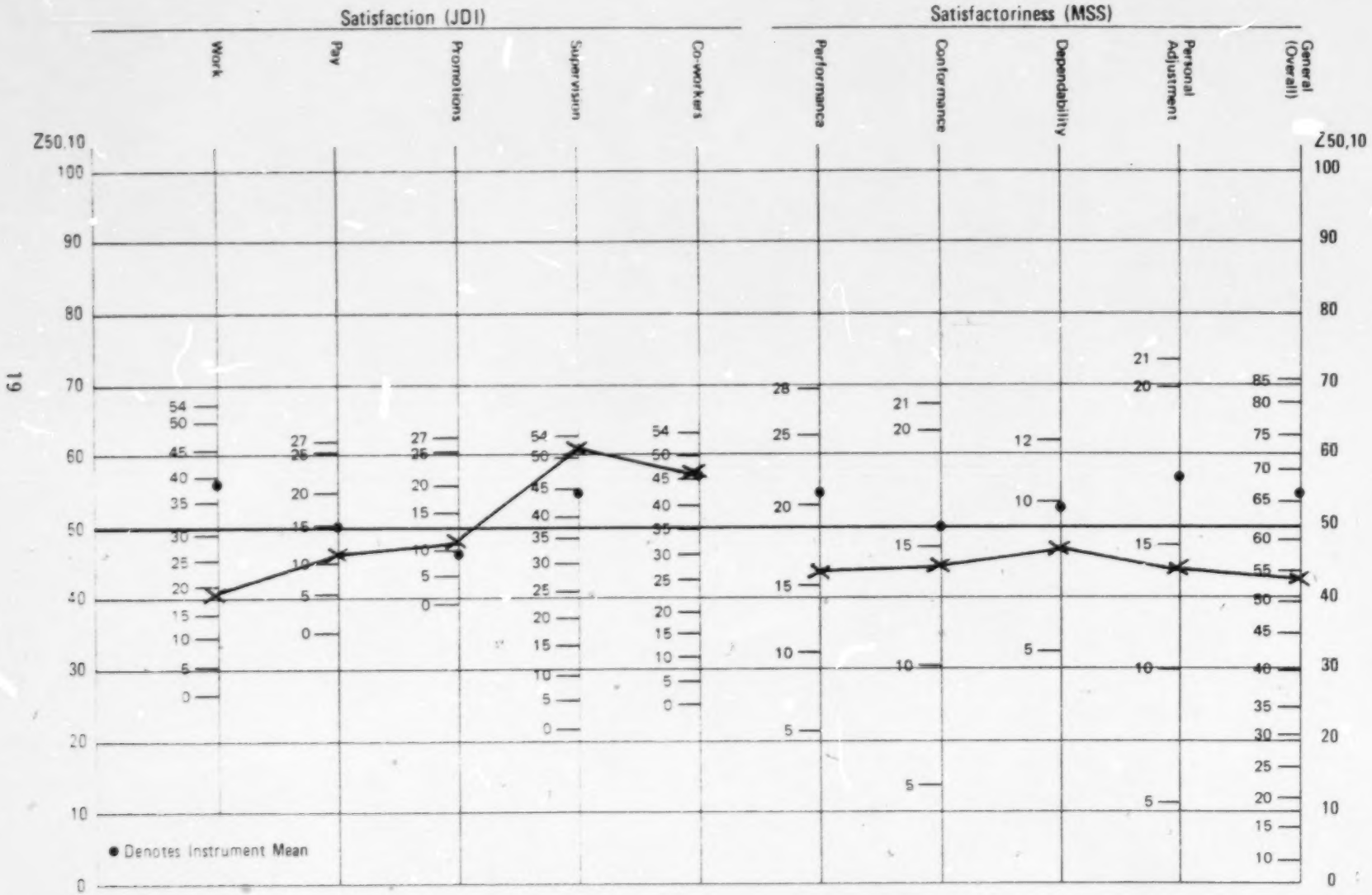
On the other hand, Anita remains confused and ambivalent in that she reflects James' rigidty about almost anything. However, when the interviewer spoke with her individually, she was easily frustrated and often unable to make choices. The Randles report they make decisions together, but making decisions together usually means James telling Anita we should do this and we should do that. Anita's function appears to be to agree. Apart from this identity confusion, Anita seems fairly happy, enjoys the children and does not seem displeased in any way with the marital relationship.

A good guess is that the Randles will ultimately be successful but it is the opinion of the interviewer that they would have been so without being exposed

to the experience of Mountain-Plains. Mountain-Plains, apparently, was more a detour than a stepping stone for the Randles.

Figure 1

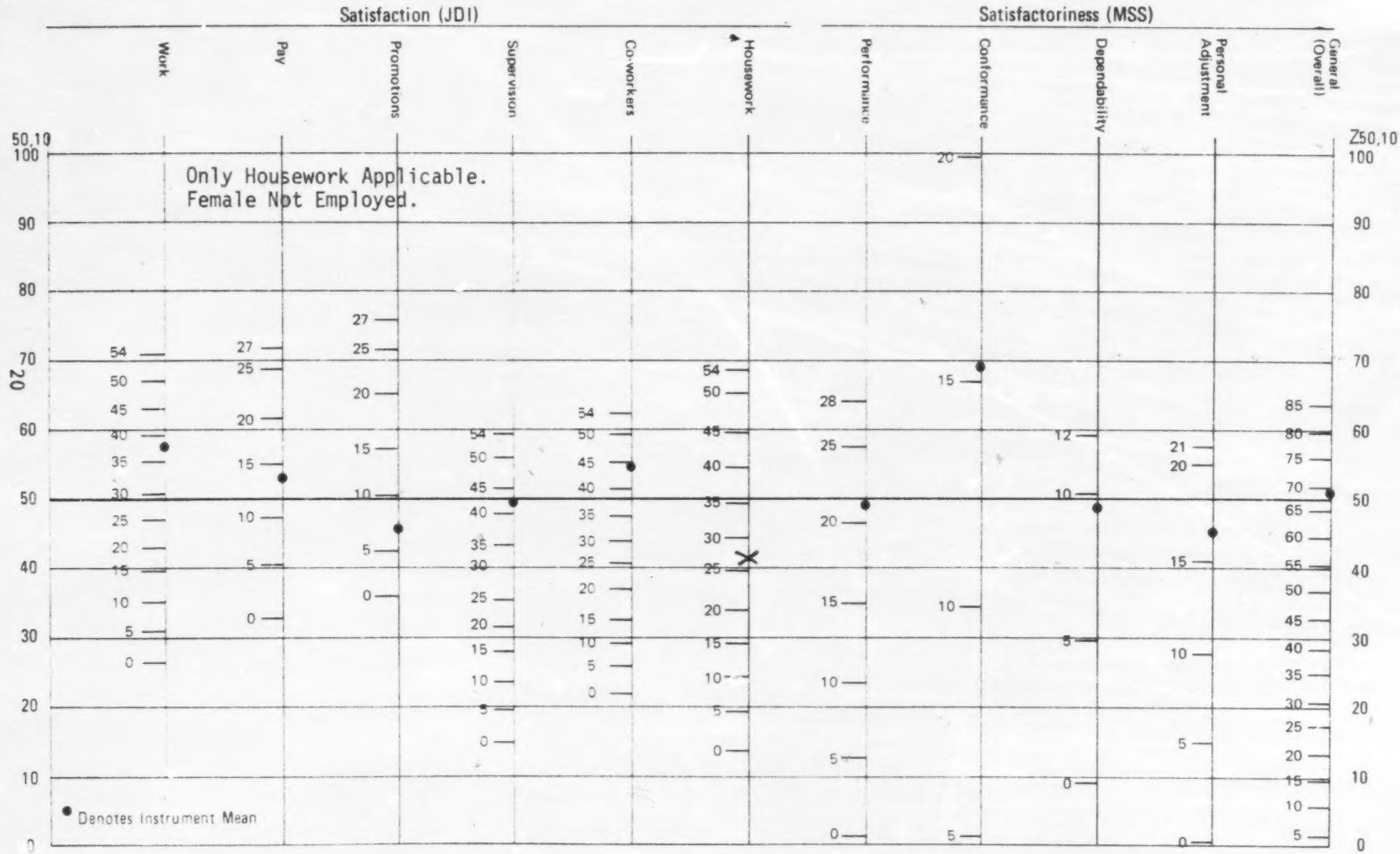
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – MALE



Note: Profile based on entering student scores.

Figure 2

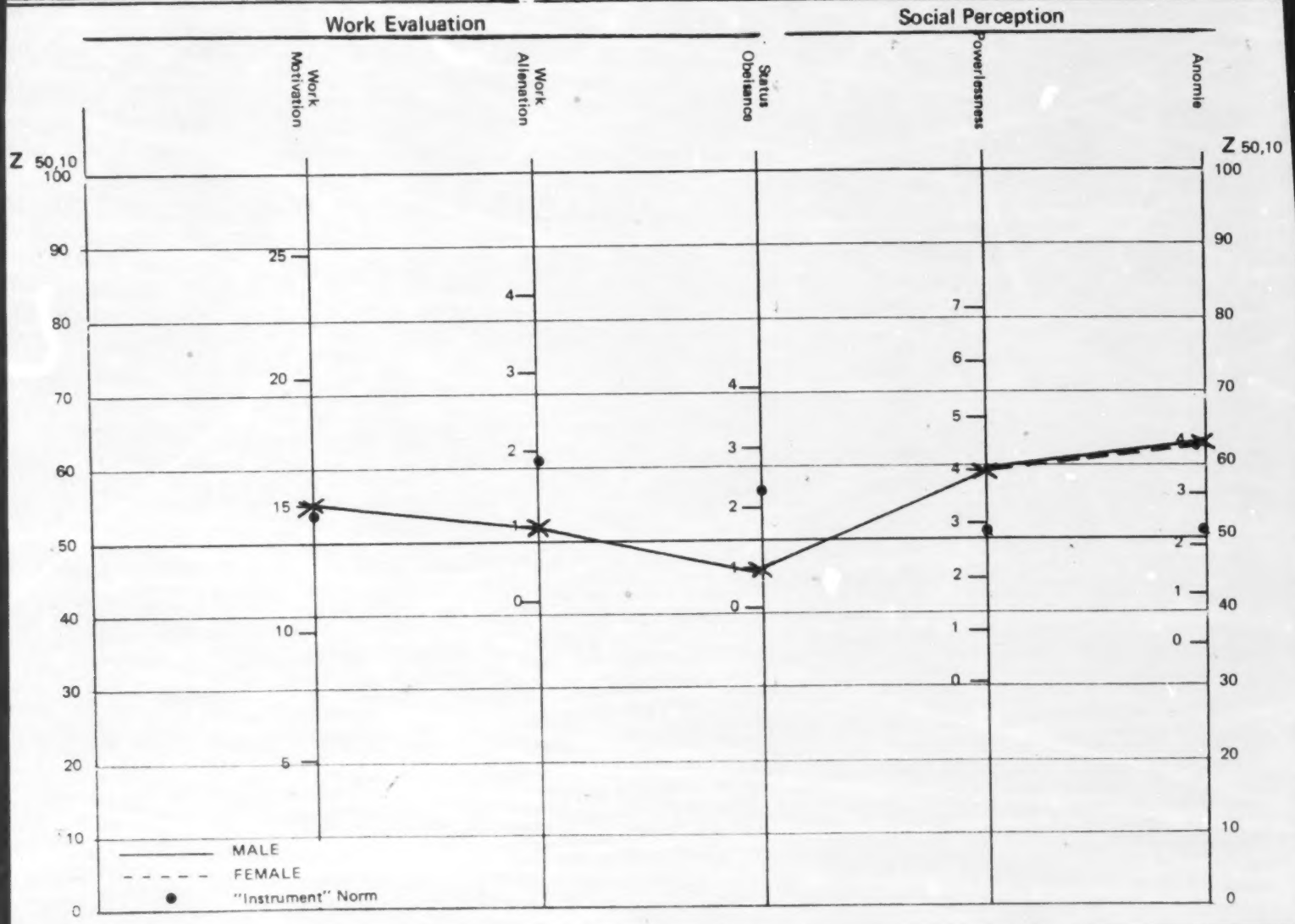
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – FEMALE



Note: Profile based on entering student norms except "Housework" which is based on instrument norm for employment.

Figure 3

MOTIVATION AND ALIENATION



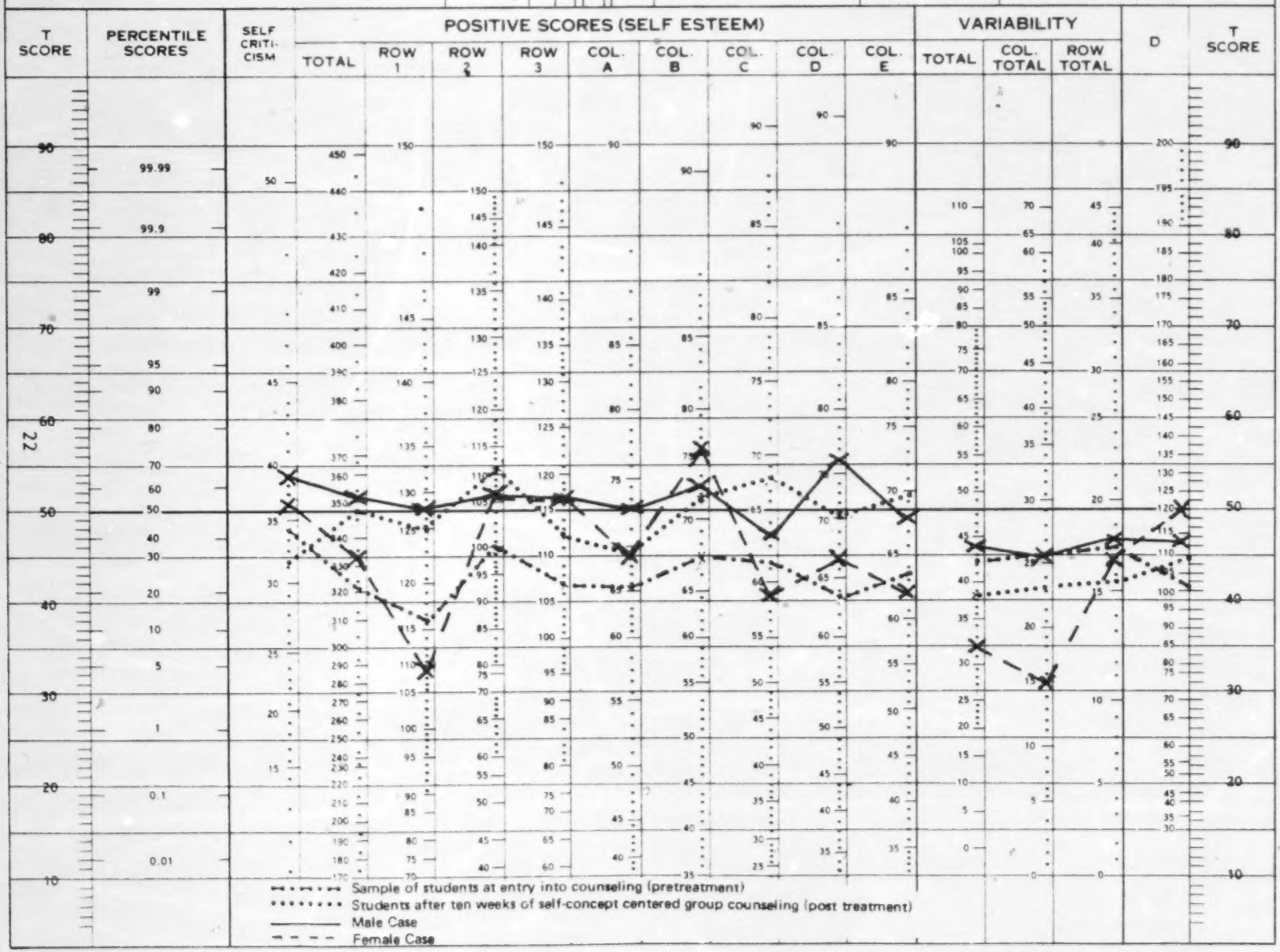
Note: Profile derived from entering student data.

Tennessee Self Concept Scale – Figure 4

PROFILE SHEET

Counseling Form

NAME | SCHOOL GRADE | SEX M F | AGE | DATE | TIME STARTED | TIME FINISHED | TOTAL TIME



Note: This is the standard profile sheet for the TSCS.

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Male					Female			
High		Low			Low		High	
Much	Some	Little	None		None	Little	Some	Much
		●	- - - - -	Job Training	NA			
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Math	- - - - - - - - -			●
		●	- - - - -	English	- - - - - - - - -			●
			● -	Career Guidance	- - - - - - - - -			●
			NA	Work Experience	NA			
			● -	Counseling	- - - - - - - - -			●
			● -	Consumer Education	- ●			
			● -	Community Development	- - - - - - - - -			●
	●	- - - - - - - - -		Recreation	- - - - - - - - -			●
		●	- - - - -	Health	- - - - - - - - -			●
			● -	Home Management	- - - - - - - - -			●
			NA	Early Childhood	NA			

FIGURE 5

UTILITY RATING OF MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM ELEMENTS

TABLE 1

SELF RATING OF PERSONAL AND WORK TRAIT CHANGES

Male		Female	
Improved	Regressed	Improved	Regressed
No Changes		Appearance	Competence
		Attendance	
		Self-Confidence	
		Self-Knowledge	
		Accepts Responsibility (tasks)	
		Courtesy	
		Ambition	

TABLE 2

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. "Rate Mountain-Plains as an influence in your life."

	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
Male			o		
Female			x		

2. "Knowing what you know now, would you have chosen Mountain-Plains?"

	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Don't Know	Probably No	Definitely No
Male					o
Female					x

3. "What is your rating for your current life in general?"

	Completely Satisfied	Well Satisfied	Neither Extreme	A Little Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Male					o
Female			x		

4. "Rate your success:

		Completely Successful 9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Completely Unsuccessful 0
The year before M-P."	Male			o							
	Female							x			
Now."	Male										o
	Female				x						
Five years from now."	Male							o			
	Female		x								